

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

Report From Paris and London

AFTER SOME TIME in London and Paris during which I talked with many officials and newspapermen, I am satisfied that in themselves the problems of the Atlantic Alliance and the Western community are quite manageable, given ordinary competence in foreign affairs. In this they may differ, in fact I think they do differ radically, from our problems in Asia. For as regards Europe there is no conflict of vital interests. There are no desperate and tragic issues, none which is insoluble. About none need it be said that there is no visible solution. Moreover, and above all, Europe and America are members of the same community.

Nevertheless, there are problems within this Western community which put a heavy strain upon our official relations and some strain, less than one might have anticipated, on popular feeling on both sides of the Atlantic. It is evident that the center of the strain is between Paris and Washington, and since the beginning of the year 1965 the strain has aggravated a great deal the relation between General de Gaulle and President Johnson. That is to say, the issues between Washington and Paris which have been posed since about 1958 became heavily charged when President Johnson decided to escalate the war in Vietnam and to intervene with massive force in the Dominican Republic.

Until this winter, the issues between France and the United States were entirely those arising from the transition out of the post-war period, and from the cold war with the Soviet Union. The reason why the issues are primarily focused upon France and the United States is that among the



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larger countries of Western Europe Gaullist France has most fully emerged from the war and its aftermath, and is therefore most fully independent. Britain, unlike France, is still entangled in the financial consequences of the World War and with the unliquidated remnants of her former empire in the Middle East, Africa, and the Far East. For West Germany the terms of peace have not yet been settled. Germany and the German capital are still divided. Italy has achieved no sure internal pacification as has Gaullist France, and is in a state of more or less permanent political crisis.

This, and not the personal idiosyncrasies of Charles de Gaulle, is the reason why France is freer than any other country west of the Soviet Union to concern itself with the future of Europe.

I THINK I can report about the French position on the more concrete issues

between Paris and Washington, and this will be the more agreeable part of what I have to report.

GOLD. All French authorities are agreed that the present international monetary system of the gold exchange standard is working badly, is contrary to their own interests, and should be reformed and probably will have to be if a world monetary crisis is to be avoided. But on the basis of this agreement there is an important difference of opinion within the Gaullist administration about what is to be done to reform the monetary system. There are two schools. One is the official view held by the Treasury and the Bank of France with the Finance Minister, Giscard d'Estaing, as its protagonist. The other is an unofficial view propounded by M. Jacques Rueff. It has strong adherents in very high quarters in the Gaullist administration, but it has not, so I was

told, been accepted by General de Gaulle.

The unofficial Rueff school proposes to double the price of gold to about \$70 an ounce and to use the proceeds to pay off the American and British currency debts abroad. The official school would accomplish the same object of paying off the dollar and sterling debts by the creation of a new international monetary unit to be managed by the ten countries whose currencies are used in world trade. Between this official view and the progressive wing of the American monetary experts there is no unbridgeable gap. The French system could be adapted to achieve the expansion of liquidity which is the goal of American policy. It would be silly to inflate the remaining Franco-American differences into a melodrama in which General de Gaulle is trying to wreck the American dollar.

THE FUTURE of NATO NATO differs from a traditional military alliance in that there has been organized a permanent international staff and command. The French view is that this international superstructure was created to deal with the danger of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe and that this danger, which was real enough in the early 1950s, no longer exists. It no longer exists because the Soviet Union is effectively deterred by the United States nuclear power and, second, because since the death of Stalin the Soviet Union has become greatly preoccupied with her own internal problems and with the problems of China.

The Gaullists believe that because the NATO structure is not necessary it does much harm to keep it going. General de Gaulle has, to be sure, a deep personal distrust of integrated military commands, of any relationship which leaves the soldier in any doubt as to whether his orders come from his own countrymen. But above and beyond this

personal conviction there is a general French belief that the time has come to put an end to the cold war with the Soviet Union, to make peace with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and solve the German problem, and that dismantling the

NATO structure is necessary in order to promote this peace.

What then is to become of the North Atlantic Treaty if the organization is disestablished? My own conclusion, based on much inquiry, is that the structure need not be wholly disestablished, and that the real field of the coming negotiations about NATO will be how much of a common planning staff is to be maintained into the 1970s.

GERMANY and the Soviet Union.

There has been much confusion here about whether or not General de Gaulle is proposing to exclude the United States from a settlement of the German question. Certain of his words have lent themselves to this interpretation, but in fact that is not the intention, so I am assured, for it would be a meaningless thing to propose.

The French government has two different but complementary things in mind. The first is that the German question can be settled peaceably only with the consent and cooperation of the nations of Eastern Europe and of the Soviet Union. Insofar, therefore, as Western Germany and the United States entertain any notion that they can compel the Soviet bloc to surrender East Germany, they are obstructing the pacification of

Europe. That is what the French mean by saying, though their language has been inaccurate and misleading, that the German question is a question for Europeans.

But at the same time the French government is now, though it was not a few years ago, in favor of Soviet-American negotiation aimed at improving the general context of a European settlement—by the regulation and reduction of armaments, by agreements of non-aggression, by phased disengagement, and by the increase of economic and cultural relations.

If there is any radical difference here with the fundamentals of President Johnson's European policy—to solve the German problem by building bridges to the East—I do not know what that difference is.

BUT THIS is not all that needs to be said. What I have written today is the brighter side of the picture. The darker side, which I must reserve for another article, is that there exists not only in France and just under the surface in Britain, but also elsewhere, a profound crisis of confidence in the competence of the Johnson Administration as the leader of the Western Alliance and of the non-Communist world.

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